

Statement: Congressman Kaiali'i Kahele

Topic: Member Day

Time: May 18, 2021, 10:00 AM Eastern Time

Aloha Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Thompson, and Members of the Committee. Mahalo for hosting today's bipartisan Member Day hearing.

Agriculture is Hawai'i's third-largest industry consisting of predominantly small, family-owned operations that generate more than \$1 billion in revenue annually. These operations create business and job opportunities and help keep our rural communities vibrant. Hawai'i leads the nation in the production of coffee, macadamia, ginger root, pineapples, bananas, taro, and passion fruit, and our floriculture industry generates more than \$85 million in revenue each year.

Island geography, both within and between islands, restricts businesses in various ways related to the economics of operations. Fixed costs as a percentage of revenue are higher for transportation, labor, energy, land, input, and other operating expenses. Tropical and subtropical agriculture and year-round growing seasons make it challenging to control insects, weeds, funguses, and plant diseases. While many farmers embrace integrated pest management techniques, some are compelled to purchase expensive synthetic controls to limit crop losses from noxious species. Separation from Land Grant Universities and Federal Research and Development Laboratories further inhibits acquiring new and innovative technologies in a timely manner. Additionally, federal food programs such as the Women, Infant, and Children Farmers' Market Nutrition Program and the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program have been invaluable. Still, much can be done to address the concerns and needs of Hawai'i's and our nation's agricultural, rural communities.

To address Hawai'i's pressing agriculture needs, I first ask the Committee to modernize federal agriculture research facilities and commit to a business plan to address land-grant university research infrastructures. Our Hawai'i research facilities at the Daniel K. Inouye Pacific Basin Agricultural Research Center and the University of Hawai'i College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources are crucial to controlling tropical agriculture insects, weeds, funguses, and plant diseases. Second, I ask the Committee to examine ways to simplify the application process for small producers under the Micro-Grants for Food Security Program (MGFSP) and increase the authorization level for the MGFSP to \$20 million. Third, I ask that the Committee expand food hubs, food banks, community support agriculture (CSA), and food pantries in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. In Hawai'i, these programs provided fresh fruits, vegetables, and protein to consumers in need, but they also helped stabilize local farms by creating a demand for produce. Given Hawai'i's small-scale farm operations, food hubs, CSAs, and other outlets are critical demand-side outlets for food producers to sell their crops at a fair market price.

Lastly, as Congress works to reauthorize the Farm Bill in 2023, I ask the Committee to establish in the 2023 farm bill a program dedicated to areawide integrated pest management (AIPM).

AIPM techniques are the basis of the successful coffee berry borer program. I will continue communicating Hawai'i's priorities with the Committee as you work on the 2023 farm bill.

I look forward to working closely with you to strengthen our nation's farm programs. Mahalo for your commitment to helping our farmers nationally and in Hawai'i.